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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2072
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2449
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4645
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2314
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2893
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3188
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000021

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD, IIP, ECA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN LAUNCHES NEW TV CHANNEL

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (U) SUMMARY: Turkmenistan launched a new TV channel "Turkmen Owazy" (Turkmen Melody) on January 1. The channel runs 24/7, carrying various musical programming and represents a slight expansion in the cultural space and collaboration between private video production and state media. And unlike the other four state TV channels, it has no political content. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

13. (U) In mid-December, Turkmenistan's President, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, signed a decree to launch a new state TV channel that would disseminate the best works of musicians and vocalists "glorifying unity and accord in Turkmen society, to introduce the international community with the great deeds and achievements of Turkmenistan and raise the efficiency of the national media." The new TV channel is available via Russian "Yamal" satellite, positioned on 90 degrees of eastern longitude, where the other state channels are located, at 3,623 MHz frequency, at SR 4285 Mb/per second transfer rate with L polarization. The 23-year-old nephew of President Berdimuhamedov, Mekan Babayevich Komekov, is the station's director.

PROGRAMMING

14. (SBU) The content of programming is mainly musical and cultural and in the Turkmen language. The channel also carries various archive materials of well-known Turkmen musicians from the Soviet era (also in Turkmen). The channel seems to feature mostly patriotic or romantic songs, especially those performed with traditional Turkmen instruments. The content repeats every few hours, with some new content gradually introduced and replayed over several days. Modern singers conduct interviews, share their life stories and cultural views. The channel programming also includes interview-type shows, where guest speakers hold discussions about well-known singers and musicians about their creative work and contributions to Turkmen culture. Notably absent is material about the President or anything particularly political - something novel for Turkmen TV.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: The new "Turkmen MTV" is a mild expansion of the cultural space in state media. The new TV channel focuses on

traditional music with musicians wearing traditional Turkmen clothing. It is noteworthy that it appears entirely apolitical outside of generally patriotic songs. Some music videos also address "hardships" in the sense of unfulfilled love or troubled relationships, which also represents a slightly wider space of artistic expression. The programming of the channel is clearly still under development. Post believes that the production of videos and recordings are made at private studios, which enables the channel to use better quality video materials and labor free of charge, but also represents a step forward in state and private media cooperation. Private studios are dependant on Turkmenistan's Ministry of Culture that licenses them. END COMMENT.

MILES